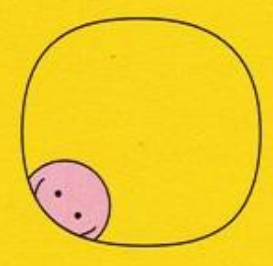
The Australian Children's Television Foundation
presents

The Eyes of the Child:

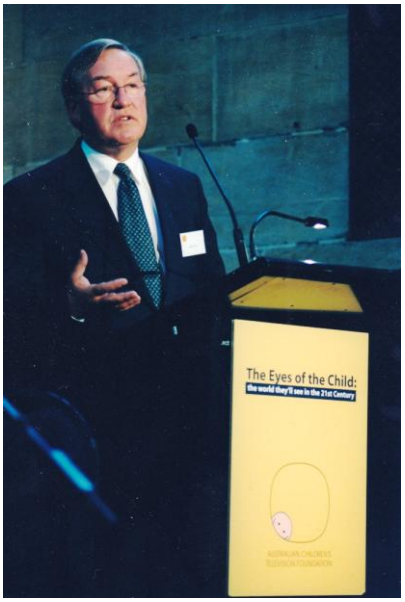
the world they'll see in the 21st Century

Wednesday 20 March 2002
The Chapter House
St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne



AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S
TELEVISION FOUNDATION

P R O G R A M



The Eyes of the Child

- The World They'll See in the 21st Century

Closing Address:

by The Hon. Norman Lacy,
(former Victorian Minister for the Arts and Educational Services)

20 March 2002

This symposium has been described as "a milestone in the journey of the *Australian Children's Television Foundation*". An apt description.

When she wrote that, the Foundation's esteemed Director knew - but most of us didn't - what an appropriate description that would turn out to be - *"a milestone in the journey"* of the Foundation.

What she meant, I suspect, was that this would be a historically significant gathering of people with a keen interest in the kind of world that children's eyes will encompass during the next 10, 20, 50 or 100 years.

A forum:

- that would gather together some of the leading thinkers on the issues that have concerned the Foundation for two decades
- that would bring those minds to focus on a most relevant, if not critical, issue for the immediate future - what the present and succeeding generations of children can expect to have to face up to in a future dominated by new forms of information technology and
- that would celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Foundation's birth

I suspect that what she didn't mean at the time by the use of the "milestone" metaphor was that this was to be the last major public event, which she would inspire her ACTF staff to organise and execute with her hallmark excellence.

1) In respect to the quality of the contributions of our speakers today, (who have come from Brazil, Canada, Ghana, Greece, The Philippines, the United Kingdom, the United States, as well as other parts of Australia) it has indeed been "a milestone".

On your behalf, I want to thank them for travelling to Melbourne to lend their intellect and enthusiasm to the importance and relevance of this symposium.

Their presentations and comments have been as powerful an_influence on me as was the historic paper the Dr Edgar originally wrote about 22 years ago and which so profoundly impacted my thinking on these issues and which we used together to generate enthusiasm for the establishment of ACTF.

2) In respect to the general theme of the conference, it has also been "a milestone". The rapid convergence today, and in the immediate future, of what have been for most of the past 20 years diverse technology platforms, has generated unbelievable opportunities for governments and international groups committed to the ideals enshrined in the Foundation's mission.

3) In respect to the celebration of the outcome of the energy and insight that has gone into implementing that mission, the objectives and strategies that it has inspired over two decades and the Board members who have been responsible for that achievement - it has been "a milestone"'

And we onlookers - whether we are mums and dads with kids or not - we salute them and the 82 government ministers they have badgered into submission.

I sense after today that the next ten years are going to be even more challenging than the task that in 1981 the late Paul Landa, the NSW Education Minister, and I commissioned Patricia Edgar and Frank Meaney with on behalf of the Education and Arts Ministers of that time.

4) Equally significant, Dr Edgar's imminent retirement from the carriage of the ACTF mission in 3 months from now is "a milestone" in her personal journey and in our opportunity to be swept along by:

- her erudite analysis of the issues,
- her awesome political skills honed in marshalling the forces and cash of governments of different philosophical persuasions for more than 20 years, and
- her unswerving focus on the essence of what will make a difference in accomplishing the next step in the journey.

This symposium has been a pointer along the road that has been a career long journey for the Foundation's Director. We express our grateful thanks for what she has done and wish her every success and happiness in the future.

Allow me to conclude on a personal level. There are not a lot of events about which I look back on in my career with a deep sense of satisfaction.

But amongst the most satisfying of them is the moment when I took the punt and asked Dr Edgar to come and work for me half time in a *"dingy little office with its stingy ray of sunlight"* in Exhibition St, here in Melbourne and to begin working on turning her vision into a reality.

And the rest as they say is history. But what a rich history of achievement in *"caring for kids"* it has been. But the rest is also the future of:

- our children's perception of themselves,
- where they have come from and where they are going,
- and of how they are going to relate to one another in the world around them,
    - their identity, - their destiny, - their relatedness.

the ideas that this symposium has been addressing so thoughtfully.

So even if you have not spoken here today, thankyou for being here and for contributing to this "milestone" event on our journey into an unknown but I feel much more understandable future, as a result of your thinking.

And thankyou for your sharing in this celebration of the ideals of the *Australian Children's Television Foundation* and of comparable organisations worldwide who are represented here.

And thankyou to the ACTF Board for you're very kind and thoughtful invitation for me to be here to make these few concluding comments and to declare this symposium - *"The Eyes of the Child"* - closed.

It has been a great honour for me to participate in even a small way today.